take pains to comb themselves, particularly the women. I remember an occasion when I wished very much to obtain a paddle, made of "palo-fierro" [iron-wood--Translator] and having two blades, the blades ending in long, narrow points. It belonged to an Indian friend of mine who had quite a beautiful wife. I offered him a comb in exchange for the double paddle, but after having considered the matter for a while he refused to make the exchange. His wife seemed to me to be very sorry that the deal had not come off, and she must have made use of all her wiles for on the following day her husband spontaneously came [176] and proposed that we make the exchange. It may be that the reader would have thought better of my being a little more generous, but let it be remembered that if I had given my comb away I would not then have been able to obtain the paddle, which was of more interest to me than the Adamic Indian couple.

What I have said of the Matacos can also be said of the Tobas, with this addition, that the Tobas are taller than the former Indians and generally show a larger expanse of forehead -- I do not know if they are actually broader -- owing to their habit of tying their hair up with a band. This information is true also of the Mocovíes and Chulupíes, all of whom inhabit the Argentine Gran Chaco, to the north of which, in the Bolivian Chaco, live the Chiriguanos and Cirionoses.

Among all these Indians the skin color varies between that of new copper and mud, there being also, here and there, some with blackish markings or blemishes.

Chapter III

Some Ethnic Characteristics

It is customary to say that these Indians are extremely dirty, but I have some very serious doubts in that regard, for I have seen them, in the summer time, run into the river for pleasure's sake at certain fixed hours of the day in great numbers, both men and women, each sex in its own determined place. This would appear to be a custom and not a mere whim. In addition to this they often go into the water to fish. It is true that they seem to be dirty, mostly because of their

table, or a guinea pig, which are excellent tidbits, though the lack of salt makes culinary success doubtful for one who has been used to it from the very baptismal font.

The Indians like a white person to be free and easy with them and to appreciate their things. So it was that I, when I was in their camps, after having gained their confidence, would go about here and there tasting their food, and they would be beside themselves with laughter while I repeated "hiss," "hiss," which means "good," "good." Of course one must eat with the fork which nature has supplied, with the exception of soup which is drunk with the shell of a clam which is very abundant in the surrounding lakes. Where I did almost jeopardize my reputation was once when I had to drink from a vile gourd with a really filthy lip. But I closed my eyes and a few moments later opened them covered with glory, and triumphant.

On that occasion, upon taking our leave, the Indians indicated that they wished to see us fire our rifles and we, to please them, fired two or three times into the air. It was something to hear the yelling of those women, and to see the tumult of boys struggling to pick up the shells. How similar is man in all stages of civilization and age.

I was forgetting to say that the width of the huts is hardly ever greater than the length of a bed.

Chapter IV

The Indian Women

Let us now for a while take up the matter of the Indian women. The Mataco women are generally rather short, but this does not keep them from being, on occasion, quite charming and well formed while they are young [179]. While living among them it is not unusual to see them naked, but in the presence of strangers they never lack a more or less protective fig leaf. On board our ship we had, for a good many days, a man and his wife. The latter wore a pair of shorts such as those we wear when we go bathing, and as she was young and well built and good looking, I can give assurance that the situation was of somewhat questionable benefit to some of our argonauts, forced anchorites as they were.

because he was so tall, and the Matacos called Quiatzutaj, which means Vilelón (large Vilela Indian--Translator), because of his national origin and size, when I asked him how things were going with him replied: "Well...I...I rich...I having...much... algarrobo pods...I rich." They are miserly with these pods and with aloja, to the extent that they will not barter them except on very rare occasions. Only in a niggardly way and half heartedly will they invite anyone to share their aloja.

One morning I came upon a group of some forty Indians who were sitting around a yuchan of aloja. When I made my appearance and as soon as they recognized me they all began to shout: "John, John...yúc-cu-ás...yúc-cu-ás" (tobacco, tobacco), and I answered "hué-ni-tdé: niquiolá pac" (I have none, later I shall give you some). Only then did they invite me to drink with them and at my first refusal did not insist a second time, the chief saying to me -- "No my child...no...we...taking...you giving...tobacco." This was by way of politeness, in the Indian manner to be sure, but politeness nonetheless. I, to please them, made some effort to speak a few words to them in their own language and finally took my leave saying: "Amecná, nu yopil nuháuet...nutpinlá pac...niquioc-la yuc-cu-as..." (Goodbye, I am going home...I shall come back right away...I shall give tobacco). And all of them, full of pleasure because I spoke to them in their language and promised them tobacco shouted: "Amecná... amecná...tapil...ccaelitt (Goodbye, goodbye, come back soon). I returned after two or three hours with my pockets bursting with cut tobacco [190] and found all of them still drinking. As soon as they saw me they reminded me of my promise, which I thought they might have forgotten amidst the fumes of drunkenness. I distributed it to them and even when it was all gone they kept on asking me for more, upon which I turned my pockets inside out and shouted to them "namhuen, namhuen" (I have no more). They, satisfied with the eloquence of my demonstration, gave up their clamoring saying hée hée, which means "well, well"; but they forgot to offer me another drink of aloja.

While on the subject of greetings: these Indians have the custom of tapping the chest of their guests lightly and amicably with their half-closed fist, accompanying these caresses with expressions of good fellowship such as hée, hée, etc. -- (Good, good! etc.).

It seems to me that some philosophers, among them, Humboldt in his Cosmos, have pointed out this same fact and have given it a name which I cannot now recall.

It is very difficult to get any information from the Indians regarding their beliefs: they, in spite of having a deep disregard and scorn for the mysteries of the Christian faith, do all they can to avoid being ridiculed, threatened and catecized by their presumptious and intolerant enemies.

Faustino, a Christian and a refugee from amongst them, when questioned by me regarding any of their religious practices, would answer: "I do not know, sir -- the Indians are very distrustful."

The following which I am about to recount I gathered directly from some of them after having been successful in inspiring them with confidence by talking with them, giving them presents, being very friendly and having close acquaintance with them and by letting them see that I had a high regard for their beliefs.

Among the Matacos the spirits are called a hót, and among the Vilelas, cokss.

These spirits live underground but at nighttime they come up out of the earth and wander about near men's houses; they also enter the bodies of persons and usually cause them to become diseased. The a hót ride upon the wind, accompany storms (or are indeed the very storms themselves) and dance around the villages, huts and persons whom they wish to injure. The most terrible a hót is smallpox, against which the witchdoctors are absolutely powerless. So terrified are the Indians of this a hót that when it appears in a hauet-éi (village) they all abandon it as fast as they can, usually setting fire to it and abandoning the sick there. In spite of this [199] smallpox wreaks havoc among them, mostly, I believe, because of not taking the proper precautions (which is impossible, their houses and clothing being what they are) rather than because of lack of domestic and personal cleanliness which, in so far as I have been able to observe, is quite adequate. Practically all cases of smallpox prove fatal, and that is why one sees so few Indians marked by the disease.

Every man has a soul which, after he has died, goes down into the earth to join its companions, amongst whom he enjoys

Chaco Indians SI4

ignorant whites, in their turn, have a great deal of faith in the Indian witch doctors.

I know for a fact that rich ranchers have called Indians to come and treat them.

The witch doctors attempt to cure their patients by exorcising the a'hots by shouting, leaping, and blowing and spitting into the sick person's mouth. They prescribe, along with this exorcising activity, certain homeopathic remedies such as dieting, bathing and I believe massaging also.

The faith which they place in their incantations does not wane even in the presence of white man's medicine.

It happened once while we were on board the river boat that the boat stuck fast in the mud. A number of Indians surrounded us and a group of them brought forward a sick Indian for us to cure. We did not have our interpreter with us on that occasion, but I was able to put my notes to some use and finally understood that the invalid had been bitten by a snake: -- "Chiasquietáj-Kíá" -- "snake-bite remedy" was what they were saying.

We had a small medicine chest and hurriedly applied ammonia to the bite. It was extremely important for us that the outcome of our ministrations be a positive one for we needed to gain prestige and also friends among the Indians, for relations were strained and some days previously we had been ambushed by a group of them who had then fired on us at point blank range.

Our patient, however, improved very slowly and there were times during the first three days -- a superstitiously critical period -- in which we had serious doubts of his recovering, because the swelling kept growing upwards towards the groin and belly and, if it had reached the area close to the heart all would have been over for him.

During this whole period of treatment -- which was carried on in a pretty rigorous fashion, [210] the situation hardly calling for ladies with kid gloves -- the patient took only water, as the witch doctors prescribed, and then, during the night while the crew slept, the doctors would begin to chant húu húu húu... héé héé héé... híi híi híi... and then once more húu húu húu, etc. Every now and again they would spit and blow like so many bellows upon the wound and other parts of the body, keeping this up for hours on end.

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I, who used to stay up very late, both to do my stint at guard duty and to take advantage of a few uninterrupted hours for study, used to take up a stand close to them. At first my presence there made them keep quiet, but later on, taking heart at my reiterated hiss tzilataj ("very pretty"), and seeing that I did not make fun of them, they continued in spite of my being there.

At last, after twenty days, the sick man got well.

One of the very strange treatments is the one which they ad- 752
minister to those who have been poisoned by a sting ray, which fish can administer an extremely painful and sometimes mortal wound. This treatment consists in placing the offended part, which is usually the ankle, over the smoke given off from the cracks in burning palo santo [lignum vital --Translator], which is a resinous wood, after which a woman in her menstruating period is to sit astride it. I have been assured by whites who have made the experiment that it is a very efficacious remedy.

Every treatment for sickness or wounds however needs, if it 756
is to have any virtue, to be in the hands of a witch doctor (male), *or at least in those of a female witch doctor.*

Not everyone can be a witch doctor, and just as the members of this profession make their patients pay according to the seriousness of the malady and the means of the individual, either in skins, animals, food or other things, so also does this profession have its seamy side in which quarrels and deception occur. In addition to this and in order to get greater prestige they shroud themselves in mystery and the supernatural. So it is that in the village of Granadero the Indians, speaking about a young man who was already embarked on this career, said that as a boy he had vanished and then reappeared after two years which he had spent underground among the a'hot, these a'hot having carried him off in order to instruct him in the art and imbue him with the virtues of doctor and priest.

While on the subject of these frauds I must tell of an occasion when things almost took a bad turn for me. I went to call on 123
Chief Granadero who was just recovering from a long illness. I 755
had with me, as is my custom, a pocket inkwell and a pen. Granadero noticed these things and asked me what they were. I, thinking to please him flourished the inkwell and pen and set about writing, but saw in a moment that Granadero had become furious and menacing -- his doctors had just cured him of the a'hot which

123 755

had been tormenting him for so long, and had extracted from his body several pens and a pencil, under guise of which, they said, the a'hot had been harming him.

[211] The women seem to be extraordinarily able as mid- 844 759 wives.

With singular ability they wait for the critical moment of labor and then, raising and holding the mother-to-be they shake her and keep uttering their customary exorcisms until they are successful in their endeavors.

However, if one wishes to be in on an interesting spectacle 755 one must see an invalid getting the full treatment in a village.

One evening while I was camped near a tribe I became curious on hearing a great sound of voices and the repercussion of strong blows on the ground. As my relations with these Indians was of the very best I did not hesitate to go to see what was afoot. In the midst of the village, in a sort of central square, I saw a circle of black figures illuminated fitfully by the blaze of the fires; they were the squaws and men who were sitting on their heels smoking in silence. In the center of the circle, in a space of about eight meters, four robust men with ostrich feathers and timbrels at their ankles, wrists, waists and on their heads were running back and forth, with their hands raised, gesticulating wildly and rattling some gourds half filled with seeds which added to the noise. They ran about singing and howling, and one could see that they were panting and covered with sweat. They would straighten out their legs and pound the ground with the whole sole of their feet, and as they did this they would raise their voices in a mad, desperate way, with their arms on high, heads to one side and body curved over.

Alternately two of them would stop, crouch, move their heads rapidly from right to left and up and down, howl and blow and spit on the backs, legs, heads and mouths of two invalids who were seated in their midst.

The two sick men were suffering terribly from the a'hots which had entered their bodies in the form of rheumatic pains, and the [753] witch doctors were attempting to drive them out with their infernal dance. This, it was understood, they would be unable to do until they managed, by means of their unbridled racing about and thumping, to tire and intimidate the a'hots who, with evil intent

Those pots which are used to contain water have an indented waistline around which a rope may be passed when they need to be transported. This rope, running around the jar, is slipped over the carrier's forehead and the vessel is carried on his back, to which effect he must bend back and neck forward. This manner of transportation is no where near as graceful as that of carrying jars on the head as our country women do, and rather makes the Indian women look like beasts of burden -- however, it may well be a more hygienic way and is, in any case, more practical when traveling along half choked forest paths.

They have no knowledge of, and do not practice, agriculture; yet they do sometimes plant corn (which, as is well known, originated in America) and also pumpkins. When they think it is time to go and eat the crop, they harvest it. They do not grind the corn, but boil it and the pumpkins also while they are yet green -- a harvest, then, is gathered in piece meal and lasts quite a long time. In order to sow they make use of a hard wood spade in the form of a small oar, or a large spear head; the husband makes a hole in the earth, his squaw throws in the seed, covers it, and that is all. The seed is sown in a recently burned off, damp field, that is, one which has just been rained on.

The crop is owned communally by all, but they are nigardly with it concerning outsiders. While we were on the ship, most of our food having run out, we hungered for fresh provisions and vegetables, for we had been without them for more than three months. When the Indians made us a present of pumpkins and ears of corn we were more than delighted. These Indians were friendly, but later on their friendliness proved false for they killed our interpreter. The sailors managed to discover the location of the pumpkin patch and corn field and raided them by stealth. On the following day, when they returned to the cultivated plots they found that everything had been destroyed and not a single growing plant was left. We were never able to find even one of the Indians.

It seems, also, that the whites do not want the Indians to take up agriculture. I was told that the white settlers once [215] came upon a number of fields sown by friendly frontier Indians, and destroyed them so completely that the discouraged Indians had never again planted so much as a handbreadth of land. This action

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or of waging war, coupled with an iron constitution, allows them 147
to stuff themselves like gunny sacks.

A remarkable thing! Be it because of racial relationship, 261
be it rather because of the great similarity in their way of life, 171
the fact is that this same pendulum-like swing between extreme 147
frugality and enormous voracity is also to be found among the gauchos, and all the other inhabitants of the Argentine non-urban areas in general, not excluding other peoples of the earth who live in similar social conditions. So true is it that the same causes produce the same results regardless of where they happen to occur.

These Indians are very jealous of their equality. They do 554
not allow others to surpass them and the women are the first to attack any of their companions who, either because of natural gifts or the husband's ability, find themselves approaching a favorable position.

I cannot forget a bitter disillusion which fell to my lot on 556
one occasion. Tajo, my Mataco language teacher, has a wife 123
who is an extraordinarily beautiful Gypsy type and looks, at a distance, like one of the more beautiful women of Buenos Aires. The husband was very much in love with her and I thought that I could not do less than to make her a present of a few cheap trinkets and garments. The husband added a few more things to my gifts and so the young woman was able to dress herself up in a manner unrivaled in the area.

As soon as she went out to show off her finery before her friends, dressed in her brightly colored clothes, she was received with admiration, but also with cries of protest.

I, who have often been led to sin in the direction of artistic platonism, wished to see the Mataco beauty in her new regalia and felt I had a certain right to [223] demand to be allowed to do so, but I found that it was not possible. The chief had forbidden her to wear her gifts because the other squaws had complained that her luxurious attire detracted from their own value; and so the young matron had been obliged to distribute her clothing among the others and to keep just a few scraps for herself which she would wear only every now and then, and then not openly.

Even among the savages one must adhere to sumptuary laws!

/215 cont./

755 The whole ceremony lasted from March 20 to March 24,
554 every day from 8 A.M. to 2 P.M. and from 8 to 10 P.M.
Each day at the end of the ceremony a shot was fired to frighten the illness.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness for the Benefit of One Person

(March 26, 1933)

755 On March 26 another woman who had the same symptoms of illness as the preceding one was treated in the following manner: the site already described was used, but the flag was replaced by a large piece of red cloth with blue flowers, and a thick tuft of ostrich feathers was attached to the top of the post. The staff was decorated with ritual belts. Offerings of the same type as those for the preceding ceremony were placed on the crossbars which separated the tent from the village.
755 During the entire ceremony the sick woman remained seated
535 /216/ on a bale of hay in the center of the tent; right next to her were four of the great medicine men, a little farther away about ten young dancers, and then a final circle of six or seven women. All the officiants, adorned as usual with feathers, ritual belts, and little bells, danced and sang. A passage was
● [123] contrived in the separating crossbars, and, as I insisted on it, a medicine man came to tell me that this opening was intended to let the illness out; I asked him if my presence would prevent it from going out; he told me no, but that I was running the risk that it would enter me at the moment it left the body of the sick woman.

The dance was halted at a sign from the chief medicine man, and two men, taking a poncho, striped red and white, by its ends, began to dance, jumping sideways, legs open; then